

## 2. *Eleventh Annual Report, Year ending 31st March, 1881.*

THE Committee regret that they cannot meet the friends and subscribers of the Home with the usual report of successful working and satisfactory progress. They have had much to contend with, much to disappoint and discourage—and their duties have been both onerous and unpleasant. But, recognizing that the work of the society is one of charity and necessity, and, trusting that God's blessing will follow a persistence in well-doing, they do not shrink from a continuance of their labours, if the institution is to be maintained on its present footing and if their services are still desired, and provided the public and the Government render that support and assistance, without which all their efforts will be in vain and useless.

The history of the Home during the past year has been brought fully before the public in the local press; but it is well that a short summary of the principal events should be placed upon its records. Soon after the last annual meeting, representations strongly animadverting on the management of the institution, were made by influential parties both to the Government and in the papers; and the Committee, recognizing that statements proceeding from such a source could not be slighted or ignored, recommended the Government to appoint a Commission of Inquiry; and, after a lengthened investigation, the Commissioner, though exculpating the master from the more serious complaints preferred against him, reported unfavourably of his general fitness for the charge of such an institution, and Mr. Stickley tendered his resignation. The Committee then appointed Mr. and Mrs. Harvey as master and matron. They had recently arrived in the colony, with good testimonials, and professed a strong desire to be engaged in such work. They took charge of the children, who were at Motuihi, about the middle of December, and soon afterwards discovered that immoral practices between the elder boys and girls had been carried on for a considerable period. An independent inquiry was instituted by a sub-Committee, which corroborated the reports and implicated some other parties; and the evidence taken was placed in the hands of the Commissioner of Police for further investigation, and one of the parties was brought to trial and punished. The Committee feeling that, without better means of separating the sexes, they were not secure from a recurrence of the evil, took the further step of sending out to service all boys over twelve years of age, and such of the girls as could be suitably placed; thus materially reducing the number of the inmates.

They very much regret to add, that, though Mr. Harvey had done good service in bringing to light the existence of so great an evil, yet he proved in many other respects so unsuitable for the charge of the institution that the Committee were compelled to remove him. They have now engaged Mr. and Mrs. Hogan, on trial, and from their antecedents and excellent character, as well as from the present appearance of things at the Home, they think they have found the right persons for the position.

On reviewing the events of the past year, the Committee have come to the conclusion that they have been attempting more than their limited means and the accommodation at the Home will admit. Unlike most other parts of the colony, the Provincial Government of Auckland was never able to spare funds for the erection of suitable buildings, where boys and girls could be properly brought up together. The Home was originally intended as an immigration barrack, and the grounds are too limited to furnish separate places of recreation for the two sexes, and, though during the last four or five years a considerable sum has been collected and spent in making additions and repairs, yet the buildings are quite inadequate; it is difficult to keep them clear of the vermin that infests them, and they are insufficient and unsuited for the maintenance and training of all those children of this large district who stand in need of a home and refuge. Another great hindrance is the want of a reformatory for the reception of criminal children. Such an institution is provided for in "The Neglected and Criminal Children Act, 1867," but has never been established, and the Magistrates, rather than send juvenile offenders to prison, commit them to the Home, where their bad example and evil communications work most injuriously on the other inmates, so that absconding and petty thefts have become common offences. At the beginning of the year, before the Committee had any suspicion of the bad practices that have since been disclosed, they represented to the Government the necessity of providing a reformatory, either at Auckland or in some central part of the colony, and were informed in reply that the whole question of these institutions was under consideration. The Committee have also found themselves compelled to receive a number of infant children, though contrary to the rules of the society; but no other provision could be made for them: the cases were urgent, and there was no alternative; and considerable trouble and additional expense have been incurred in their care and maintenance. It is currently reported that it is the intention of the Government to introduce Bills into the Assembly for the general regulation of all institutions of this character throughout the colony, and that a trial will be made of the boarding-out system. The Committee offer no opinion on this latter question, as they are divided on the subject; and, as they cannot rely on any material alteration of the present system being made by the Legislature, they now invite the society to express their confidence in the management, and to strengthen their hands, by passing resolutions to the following effect:—(1.) Urging the immediate establishment of a reformatory. (2.) Calling for such improvement in the buildings at the Home as will enable both boys and girls to be properly maintained, and place the institution on an equal footing with those in other parts of the colony. (3.) Asking for an endowment in land, to aid in the maintenance of the Home. And (4.) Pledging their continued support to the Committee in carrying out the original objects of the society.

*Statistics.*—The statistics for the year ending 31st March, 1881, are as follows:—

|                               |     |     |     | Boys. | Girls. | Total. |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|--------|--------|
| In the Home, 31st March, 1880 | ... | ... | ... | 77    | 31     | 108    |
| Admitted during the year—     |     |     |     |       |        |        |
| By order of Magistrates       | ... | ... | ... | 17    | 5      | 22     |
| "    Relieving Officer        | ... | ... | ... | 2     | 3      | 5      |
| "    Executive Committee      | ... | ... | ... | 5     | 5      | 10     |
| Total                         | ... | ... | ... | 101   | 44     | 145    |